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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: POLLING OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE DATES FOR KARNATAKA'S
BY-ELECTIONS

[¶1.](#) (U) Karnataka state election officials announced on November 23 that by-elections for seven seats in the state's legislative assembly will take place on December 27. Six of these seats were held by assembly members who have left their original party (either Congress or the Janata Dal Secular Party -- JDS) to join the ruling BJP; the seventh seat is open as a result of the death of the incumbent. Indian law requires these members to resign and re-contest their seats in by-elections. An eighth constituency remains mired in legal challenges and apparently will not take part in the December 27 by-elections.

[¶2.](#) (U) Comment: Following May's legislative assembly elections, the BJP managed to secure a majority only with the help of several independent members of the legislative assembly. Success for the now-BJP candidates in the by-elections would allow the party to maintain a stable majority for the duration of its five-year term (ending in 2013). The by-elections provide an opportunity for the BJP's opponents to cast the vote as a referendum on the BJP's rule, but the apparent inability of Congress and JDS to establish an electoral alliance ought to allow the BJP's candidates to do well, adding to the party's electoral momentum as India heads towards national polls next year. An unexpectedly poor showing by the BJP would buoy the spirits of Congress supporters, who have had precious little electoral good news in India's recent state elections. End Comment.

SIMKIN